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Biography

Louis-François Duchêne (Swiss/French/British, born in London, 17 February 1927 - died 12 July 2005) was a writer, journalist, academic, and political adviser to Jean Monnet. Marked by the devastation of World War II, he recognised early on the potential of European ideas for creating a lasting peace. Duchêne also showed an ardent desire for social justice.

Summary

Duchêne's account of the life and works of Jean Monnet starts with a personal touch, when he and author of the foreword, George W Ball, give an account of how this mastermind of the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community interacted with others. They portray an idealist with an uncommon talent for persuading the right people in the French government and beyond of the benefits his plans for a 'civilianised Europe' would bring. Duchêne and Ball both show their admiration for this civil servant who never had any political ambition for himself, but the book does not stop there: Duchêne accessed archives in different countries to compile this biography of over 400 pages. The first part of the book describes Monnet's life and actions, while the second attempts to put his achievements into perspective, assessing his legacy. A commenting historian says that the author is not always 100% correct in his account of French history, but that the book represents all in all a serious and particularly honest piece of work.